

The EARL of Sunderland's Letter

To a FRIEND in LONDON:

Plainly discovering the Designs of the Romish Party,
and others, for the Subverting of the *Protestant Re-*
ligion, and the Laws of the Kingdom.

Licensed and Entred, *March 23d. 1689.*

TO comply with what you desire, I will explain some things which we talked of before I left England. I have been in a station of great Noise, without power or Advantage whilst I was in it, and to my Ruine now I am out of it. I know I cannot justify my self by saying, though it is true, that I thought to have prevented much mischief; for when I found that I could not, I ought to have quitted the service: Neither is it an excuse that have got none of those things which usually engage Men in publick Affairs: My Quality is the same it ever was, and my Estate much worse, even ruin'd, though I was born to a very considerable one, which I am ashamed to have spoiled, though not so much as if I had increased it by indirect means. But to go on to what you expect: The pretence to a Dispensing Power being not only the first thing, which was much disliked since the Death of the late King, but the foundation of all the rest, I ought to begin with that, which I had so little to do with, that I never heard it spoken of till the time of *Monmouth's* Rebellion, that the King told some of the Council, of which I was one, that he was resolved to give Employments to Roman Catholics, it being fit that all persons should serve who could be useful, and on whom he might depend. I think every body advised him against it, but with little effect, as was soon seen: that Party was so pleased with what the King had done, that they perswaded him to mention it in his Speech at the next meeting of the Parliament, which he did, after many Debates whether it was proper or not, in all which I opposed it as is known to very considerable Persons, some of which were of another opinion; for I thought it would engage the King too far, and it did give such offence to the Parliament, that it was thought necessary to prorogue it. After which the King fell immediately to the supporting the Dispensing power, the most chimerical thing that was ever thought of, and must be so till the Government here is as absolute as in *Turkey*, all power being included in that one. This is the sense I ever had of it, and when I heard Lawyers defend it, I never changed my opinion or language; however it went on, most of the Judges being for it, and was the chief business of the State, till it was looked on as settled. Then the Ecclesiastical Court was set up, in which there being so many considerable Men of several kinds, I could have but a smal part; and that after Lawyers had told the King it was legal, and nothing like the high Commission Court, I can most truly say, and it is well known that for a good while I defended *Magdalen* College purely by care and industry,

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and have hundreds of times begg'd of the King never to grant *Mandates*, or to change any thing in the regular course of Ecclesiastical Affairs, which he often thought reasonable, and then by perpetual importunities was prevail'd upon against his own sense, which was the very Case of *Magdalen College*, as of some others.

These things which I endeavour'd, though without Success, drew upon me the anger and ill-will of many about the King. The next thing to be Try'd, was to take off the Penal Laws, and the Tests, so many having promised their concurrence towards it, that his Majesty thought it feasible; but he soon found it was not to be done by that Parliament, which made all the Catholics desire it might be dissolv'd, which I was so much against, that they complain'd of me to the King, as a Man who ruin'd all his Designs, by opposing the only thing could carry him on; Liberty of Conscience being the Foundation on which he was to build. That it was first offer'd at by the Lord Clifford, who by it had done the work, even in the Late King's Time, if it had not been for his weakness, and the weakness of his Ministers: Yet I hinder'd the Dissolution several weeks, by telling the King that the Parliament in Being would do every thing he could desire, but the taking off the Penal Laws and the Tests, or the allowing his Dispensing Power; and that any other Parliament, though such a one could be had as was propos'd, would probably never Repeat those Laws; and if they did, they would certainly never do any thing for the support of the Government, whatever exigency it might be in. At that time the King of Spain was sick, upon which I said often to the King, that if he should dye, it would be impossible for his Majesty to preserve the Peace of Christendom; that a War must be expected, and such a one as would chiefly concern England; that if the Present Parliament continu'd, he might be sure of all the help and Service he could wish; but in case he dissolv'd it, he must give over all thoughts of Foreign Affairs, for no other would ever assist him, but on such terms as would ruine the Monarchy; so that from abroad, or at home, he would be destroy'd, if the Parliament were Broken, and any accident should happen, of which there were many, to make the aid of his People necessary to him. This and much more I said to him several times privately, and in the hearing of others; but being over-power'd, the Parliament was broke, the Cloistering went on, and a new one was to be chosen, who was to get by Cloistering, I need not say; but it was certainly not I, nor any of my Friends; many of them suffer'd, who I would fain have saved; and yet I must confesse with grief, that when the King was resolv'd, and there was no remedy, I did not quit, as I ought to have done, but serv'd on in order to the calling another Parliament. In the midst of all the preparations for it, and whilst the Corporations were Regulating, the King thought fit to order his Declarations to be Read in all Churches, of which I most solemnly protest, I never heard one Word, till the King directed it in Council, that drew on the Petition of my Lord the Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, and the other Lords the Bishops, and their Prosecution, which I was so openly against, that by arguing continually to shew the Injustice and the Imprudence of it, I brought the fury of the *Roman Catholics* upon me to such a Degree, and so unanimously that I was just sinkings; and I wish that I had then sunk, but whatever I did foolishly to preserve my self, I continued still to be the Object of their hatred, and I resolv'd to serve the Publick, as well as I could, which I am sure most of the considerable Protestants then at Court can testify; and so can one very Eminent Man of the Country, whom I would have perswaded to come into business, which might have done, to have helped me to resist the violence of those in power; but he despair'd of being able to do any good, & therefore would not engage. Some time after came the first news of the Prince's designs, which were not then looked on as they have proved, no body foreseeing the Miracles he has done by his wonderful Prudence, Conduct, and Courage; for the greatest thing which has been undertaken these thousand years, or perhaps ever, could not be affected without Vertues hardly to be imagin'd till seen nearer hand. Upon the first thought of his coming I laid hold of the opportunity to press the King to do several things which I would have had done sooner; the chief of which were, to restore *Magdalen College*, and all other Ecclesiastical Preferments, which had been diverted from what they were intended for, to take off my Lord Bishop of *London's* Suspension, to put the Counties into the hands they were in some time before, to annul the Ecclesiastical Court, and to restore entirely all the Corporations of *England*: These things were done effectually, by the help of some about the King; and it was then thought I had destroy'd my self, by enraging again the whole *Roman Catholick Party*, to such a height as had not been seen; they

they dispersed Libels of me every day, told the King that I betrayed him, that I ruined him, perswading him to make such shameful Condescensions; but most of all by hindring the securing the chief of the disaffected Nobility and Gentry, which was proposed as a certain way to break in the Prince's Measures; and by advising his Majesty to call a free Parliament, and to depend upon that, rather than upon Foreign assistance. It is true, I did give him those Councils which were called weak to the last moment he suffered me in his Service; then I was accused of holding Correspondence with the Prince, and it was every where said amongst them, that no better could be expected from a man so related as I was to the Bedford & Leicester families, & so allied to Duke Hamilton, and the Marquess of Halifax. After this Accusations of high Treason were brought against me, which with some other Reasons relating to Affairs abroad, drew the King's Displeasure upon me, so as to turn me out of all without any Consideration, and yet I thought I escaped well, expecting nothing less than the loss of my Head, as my Lord Middleton can tell, and I believe none about the Court thought otherwise; nor had it been otherwise, if my Disgrace had been deferred a day longer; all things being prepared for it, I was put out the 27th of October, the Roman Catholics having been two months working the King up to it without Intermission, besides the several Attacks they had made upon me before, and the unusual Assistance, they obtained to do what they thought so necessary for the carrying on their Affairs, of which they never had greater hope than at that time, as may be remembered by any who were then in London. But you desired I would say something to you of Ireland, which I will do in very few words, but exactly true.

My Lord Tyrconnel has been so absolute there, that I never had the Credit to make an Ensign, or keep one in, nor to preserve some of my Friends, for whom I was much concerned from the last Oppression and injustice, though I endeavoured it to the utmost of my Power; but yet with Care and Diligence, being upon the place, and he absent, I diverted the calling a Parliament there, which was designed to alter the Acts of Settlement. Chief Justice Nugent, and Baron Rice, were sent over with a draught of an Act for that purpose, furnished with all the pressing Arguments could be thought on to perswade the King, and I was offered forty thousand pounds for my Concurrence, which I told to the King, and shewed him at the same time the injustice of what was proposed to him, and the prejudice it would be to that Country, with so good success, that he resolved not to think of it that year, and perhaps never: This I was helped in by some Friends, particularly my Lord Godolphin, who knows it to be true, and so do the Judges before named, and several others.

I cannot omit saying something of FRANCE, there having been so much talk of a League between the two Kings. I do protest I never knew of any; and if there were such thing, it was carried on by other sort of men last Summer. Indeed French Ships were offered to joyn with our Fleet, and they were refused; since the noise of the Prince's Design more Ships were offered; and it was agreed how they should be commanded if ever desired. I opposed to death the accepting of them, as well as any assistance of men, and can say most truly, that I was the principal means of hindering both, by the help of some Lords, with whom I consulted every day, and they with me; to prevent what we thought would be of great prejudice, if not ruinous to the Nation. If the Report is true, of Men, Ships, and Money, intended lately for England out of France, it was agreed upon since I was out of business, or without my knowledge; If it had been otherwise, I believe no body thinks my Disgrace would have happened: My greatest Misfortune has been to be thought the Promoter of those things I opposed and detested, whilst some I could name have been the Inventors & Contrivers of what they have had the art to say upon others; and I was often foolishly Willing to bear what my Master would have done, though I used all possible Endeavours against it. I lie under many other Misfortunes and Afflictions extream heavy, but I hope they have brought me to reflect on the occasion of them, the loose, negligent, unthinking Life I have hitherto led, having been perpetually hurried away from all good Thoughts by Pleasures, Idleness, the Vanity of the Court, or by business: I hope, I say, that I shall overcome all the Disorders my former Life had brought upon me, and that I shall spend the remaining part of it in begging of almighty God, that he will please either to put an end to my Sufferings, or to give me strength to bear them; one of which he will certainly grant to such as rely on him, which

I hope I do, with the submission that becomes a good Christian: I would enlarge on this Subject, but that I fear you might think something else to be the reason of it, besides a true sense of my faults, and that obliges me to refrain my self at present, I believe you will repent in having engaged me to give you this Account, but I cannot the doing what you desire of me.

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